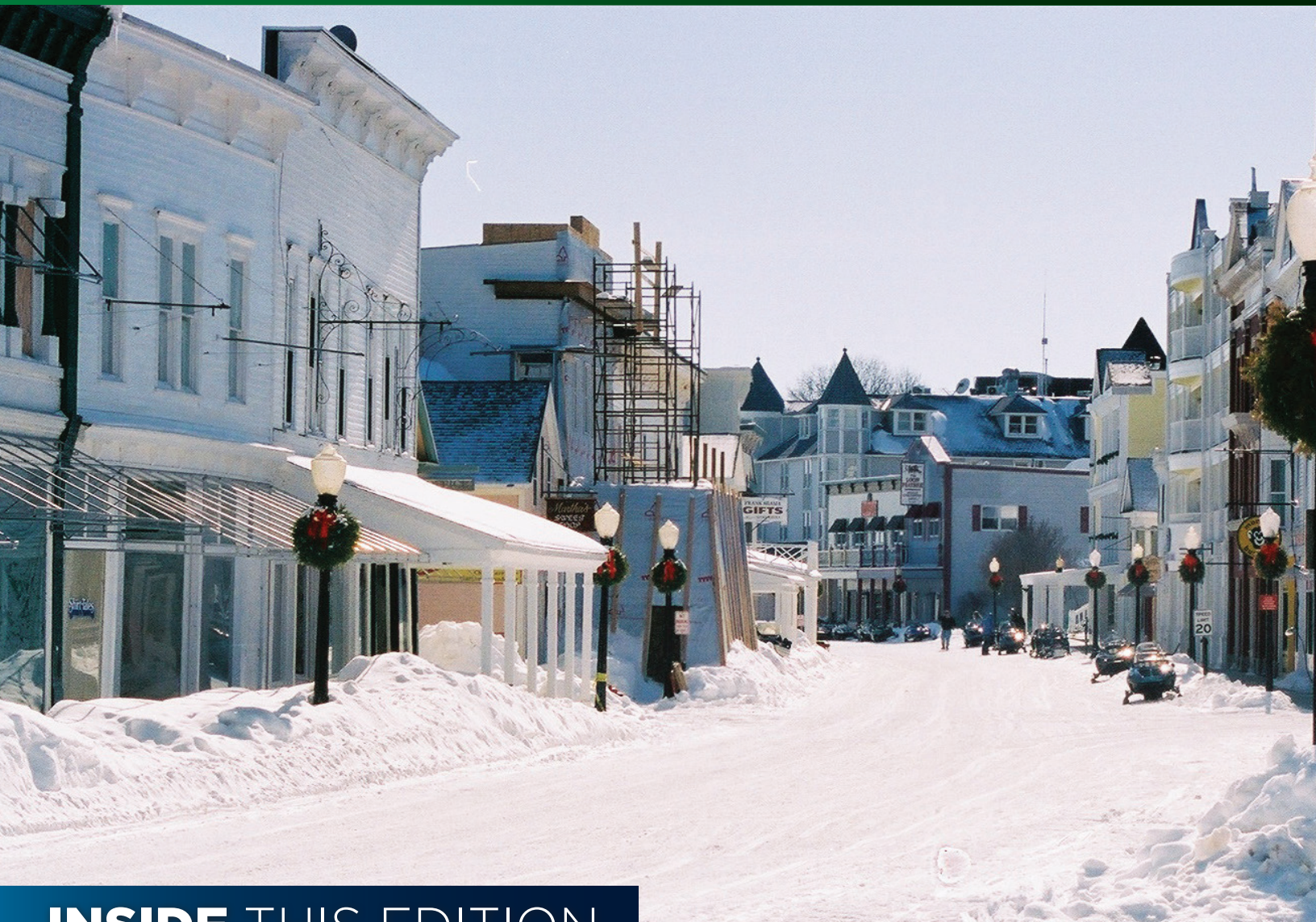


# MICHIGAN COUNTIES

Official Voice of the Michigan Association of Counties | February 2021



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# MAC

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

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## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Despite the ongoing restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the first few weeks of 2021 have been busy ones in Lansing and for your association.

As we do at the beginning of every year, our Governmental Affairs Team, led by Deena Bosworth, has developed a list of legislative priorities. These goals are developed in accordance with our policy platforms, which themselves are developed by the work of our six policy committees.

Those committees are again working on our FY21-22 platforms. Also resuming are my regular visits to county boards around the state.

Of course, these sessions are all being done virtually, which has its advantages. For example, we are seeing a noticeable improvement in participation in our policy committee sessions so far this year, likely because the technology has eliminated the barriers of time and distance for committee members.

Similarly, technology allows me to appear before two or even three boards in a single day.

We will be relying on technology as well for our first major event of 2021, the Legislative Conference. The MAC Board's Executive Committee decided that continuing uncertainty around COVID made a virtual event the wisest choice. Expect to see registration and agenda information for this event in early March.

Coming in days to your mailbox will be our 2021 MAC Membership Directory, with full listings for all 83 counties and detailed information about MAC services and the Michigan Legislature. Copies are mailed directly to commissioners, administrators and county board offices.

In late January, I was honored to accept an appointment by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to the Protect Michigan Commission, which "serves in an advisory capacity to Gov. Whitmer and (the Department of Health and Human Services). The new members are tasked with providing public leadership to elevate and reinforce the importance of an approved COVID-19 vaccine, identifying barriers that may impede the acceptance of an approved COVID-19 vaccine by Michigan residents ..."

As warranted, I will be reporting on the commission's work via our weekly Legislative Update emails and our Podcast 83 episodes.

Speaking of **Podcast 83**, we are now offering live, weekly episodes during peak legislative times of the year, including from February through May. Please save 3 p.m. on Mondays for these fast-paced updates about what MAC is doing in Lansing and beyond, sponsored by DTE Energy.

Finally, I wanted to mention a new initiative — monthly virtual meetings with county administrators and MAC staff. Our goal with these exchanges is to better understand the day-to-day challenges of our members, so we can respond more effectively in both the legislative and services arenas.

As always, if you have questions or ideas for how MAC can better serve you, please contact me at [scurrie@micounties.org](mailto:scurrie@micounties.org).

Best wishes for 2021.



**Stephan W. Currie**  
MAC Executive Director



## AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Area Agencies on Aging Association of Michigan  
CCE Central Dispatch  
Community Economic Development Association of Michigan  
Community Mental Health Association of Michigan  
County Road Association of Michigan  
Health Care Association of Michigan  
Lean & Green Michigan  
Michigan Association for Local Public Health  
Michigan Association of County Administrative Officers  
Michigan Association of County Clerks  
Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners  
Michigan Association of County Park and Recreational Officials  
Michigan Association of County Treasurers  
Michigan Association of County Veterans Counselors  
Michigan County Medical Care Facilities Council  
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# CALENDAR

All meetings are virtual.

### March 5 Finance and General Government Committee

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### March 12 Environmental and Natural Resources

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### March 19 Agriculture and Tourism

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### March 22 Health and Human Services Committee

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### Judiciary and Public Safety Committee

2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

### March 26 Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### April 2 Finance and General Government Committee

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### April 9 Environmental and Natural Resources

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### Late April/Dates TBD

### Michigan Counties 2021 Legislative Conference

### April 23 Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### April 26 Health and Human Services Committee

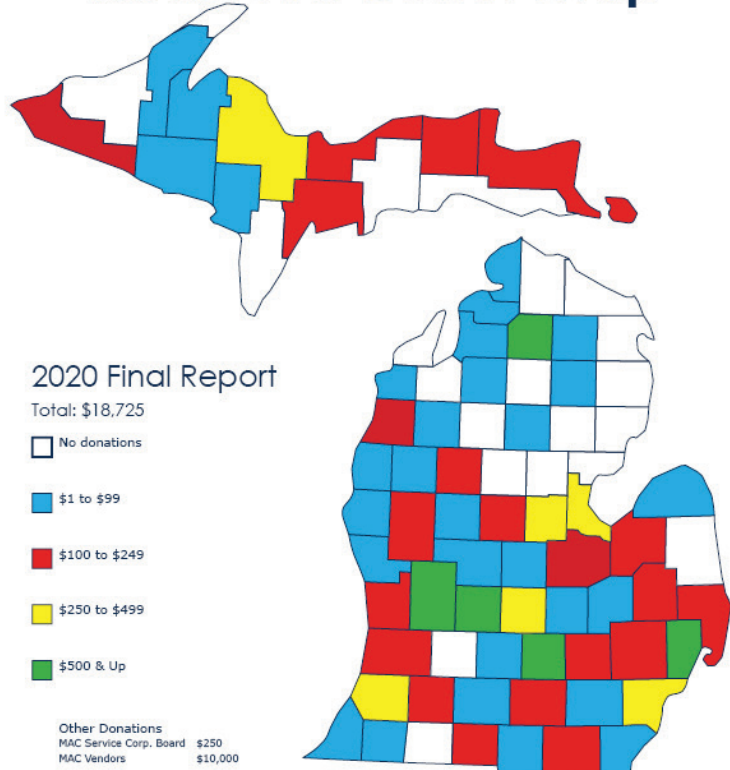
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### Judiciary and Public Safety Committee

2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

**For latest event listings, click here.**

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**MACPAC**  
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## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

# FOUR-YEAR TERMS, COUNTY ‘TRUST FUND’ HEADLINE MAC’S WORK AT STATE CAPITOL IN 2021

By Deena Bosworth/MAC Director of Governmental Affairs

A new year, new leadership in Lansing and a new legislative session bring with them new priorities, new budget requests and new momentum on unfinished business for the Michigan Association of Counties.

Topping the list of MAC’s **2021-22 legislative priorities** is a bit of unfinished business: extending county commissioner terms to four years.

The bills introduced for this purpose in the last Legislature gained some traction in committee, but as with most major policy issues, lost momentum once the pandemic hit. Sen. Ed McBroom (R-Dickinson) will lead the charge again this year, starting the push in the Senate and aiming for the four-year terms to begin with the 2024 election cycle.



Local government finance reform always will be a MAC focus and begins this year with a request for a moratorium on property tax exemptions. The legislative consensus has long been that the best way for the state to help businesses and individuals is via exemptions from local property taxes, worsening an already difficult revenue situation for counties. The first step on the road to reform is to stop the state giveaways of your dollars.

Despite years of budget cutting and careful management, counties continue to confront fiscal crises because the revenue system in Michigan is broken. Property tax revenue has just returned to levels from a decade ago and revenue sharing, a promise made by the state more than 50 years ago, is far below what it was 20 years ago, adjusting for inflation.

Without a dedicated revenue source for county revenue sharing, the state can, and has, stiffed counties to ease its own budget problems. To end this fiscal charade, MAC is calling for a “County Revenue Sharing Trust Fund” backed by a dedicated revenue stream and protected from legislative raiding parties.

Court reform remains a top priority for MAC in 2021, as it continues as the largest unfunded mandate counties face on an annual basis, with a \$1.4 billion price tag. **The report of the state’s Trial Court Funding Commission** noted contributions from the state’s General Fund to local courts equal just 2 percent of the entire cost, so

the need to rebalance funding between state and locals is essential. To achieve this, MAC seeks the creation of a “Trial Court Fund” that will receive revenue from the state’s General Fund and trial court assessments and payments, with fair and adequate distribution of those funds based on caseloads, case types and basic operational needs.

Also vital in the public safety realm is the need for the Legislature to pay for the costs of its decisions to move 17-year-old offenders to the juvenile justice system and impose new mandates on indigent defense services.

Infrastructure, support for first responders and increases in public health and mental health funding round out MAC’s to-do list this year, as their importance has never been more visible than during this last year of pandemic. Tools to advance these causes include the option for a local vehicle registration fee, a tourism reinvestment excise tax to help counties pay for first responders in our tourist destinations and a boost in annual appropriations for mental health services.

It’s a big list for 2021, and MAC is counting on members to speak early and often with their legislators about these issues. Please read your weekly Legislative Updates. Please participate in our digital advocacy campaigns. And please reach out to our team with any questions or ideas you have on how MAC can better serve you and your constituents.

## MACNEWS

# MAC APPLAUDS REVENUE SHARING, INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS IN GOVERNOR'S BUDGET

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's fiscal 2022 budget proposal makes important and much needed boosts to local governments dealing with the COVID-19 crisis and to public infrastructure, said MAC's executive director on Feb. 11.

"We greatly appreciate the variety of recommendations for spending that recognize the ongoing demands on counties, demands increased by the pandemic," said Stephan Currie.

### See FY22 county-by-county revenue sharing estimates.

He added, however, that the short-term positive news will not reverse the long-term crisis in local government finance in Michigan. A **recent analysis by the nonpartisan Lincoln Institute of Land Policy** found that not only is Michigan "unique in the restrictiveness of the state's property tax limits," but "the property tax is particularly important for local governments' fiscal health in Michigan because they have little access to other types of taxes to raise revenue."

One such example of this dynamic is in state **revenue sharing to counties**. The governor is proposing a 2 percent increase in that annual amount, boosting it about \$4 million to a total of \$231 million. However, that increase has to stand against two decades of lagging payments. In 2000, counties received \$214 million in revenue sharing. Adjusted for inflation, that would be \$330 million this year, nearly \$100 million below the governor's recommendation.

"We need a full partnership with the state to address the funding crunch, similar to what started in 2019 on the **Jail and Pre-trial Incarceration Task Force** that led to significant improvements in state policy during the last Legislature," Currie said.

Overall, though, the FY22 proposal has numerous benefits for local services and infrastructure. **Follow this link to see additional line items relevant to counties.**

For more information on MAC's work on the state budget, contact Deena Bosworth at [bosworth@micounties.org](mailto:bosworth@micounties.org).

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## MACNEWS

# MAC JOINS MICHIGAN RECONNECT EFFORT

The Michigan Association of Counties **is serving as a Champion** to support the **Michigan Reconnect**

program unveiled Tuesday, Feb. 2, in Lansing by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in an effort to help address a widening skills gap within the state's workforce.

The program is specifically designed for residents who are 25 years or older and have obtained a high school diploma or equivalent.

Michigan Reconnect will help pay the costs of tuition or training for eligible adults who want to pursue an associate degree or technical degree. The program also offers skills scholarships to help cover the cost of tuition at more than 70 private training schools with



120 programs to earn certification in manufacturing, construction, information technology, health care or business management.

In order to be eligible for Michigan Reconnect, adults must meet the following criteria:

- Age 25 or older
- High school graduate or equivalent
- Michigan resident for at least one year
- Not yet completed a college degree (associate or bachelor's)

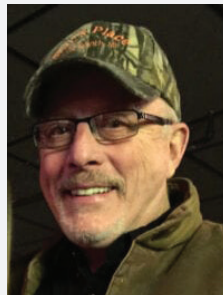
**Michigan Reconnect** pays the remaining balance of tuition and mandatory fees after other state and federal financial aid have been applied.

Interested in a skill certificate from a private training provider? Michigan Reconnect provides a \$1,500 Skills Scholarship for Michiganders enrolled in an approved training program.

## OGEMAW'S REETZ PASSES DUE TO COVID

Bruce Reetz, an Ogemaw County commissioner for 12 years, passed away on Dec. 29, 2020, due to COVID-19. He was 69.

Reetz first joined the Ogemaw Board of Commissioners in December 2007. He was first elected to a full term in 2008 and won re-election five times. He served as chair of the board from January 2019 to his passing.



Reetz

In 2020, he chose not to seek re-election and he passed just two days prior to the end of his term.

He was born Nov. 4, 1951, in West Branch and lived in Ogemaw County his entire life. He was a member of Holy Family Catholic Church, Knights of Columbus Council 8948 and served as the sexton at the Holy Family Catholic Cemetery. In addition to his county board service, his public service included stints on the board of the Ogemaw Soil Conservation and as a president of Ogemaw County Farm Bureau, plus work with the Commission on Aging, the Department of Human Services, District 2 Health Department, the Emergency Medical Service Authority and the Medical Control Authority.

## NACO OFFERS STUDENT ART CONTEST FOR NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH

NACo and county leaders are spreading the word about county roles and responsibilities, which are often unknown or misunderstood. By inviting children and young adults ages 18 and under to create artwork for the 2021-2022 "Counties Matter" calendar, NACo hopes to raise awareness about programs and services that impact people's lives every day.

Winning artwork will be featured in an 18-month NACo calendar, which will be distributed to NACo members nationwide. Winners will also be announced in NACo's flagship publication, *County News*, and their artwork will be displayed at NACo's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

To learn more about rules for the event and gather tools to promote it in your own county, **visit the contest page.**



## CRC ANALYSIS

# ZERO-BASED BUDGETING IS TIME-TESTED, WELL-SUITED FOR CURRENT SITUATION

By Eric Lupher/President, Citizens Research Council

It is often the case for governments that demand for public services outstrips available resources. That is why public budgets are really a reflection of a community's priorities. With the revenue constraints created by the pandemic, county commissioners are going to have to examine, even more closely than before, those priorities they want to fund and at what level.

They would be well served to apply a systematic budgeting methodology for this exercise, such as zero-based budgeting. The titular "zero" is a reference to the zero-sum game budget makers play at times when more money for one function by necessity leaves less funding for others.

Zero-based budgeting involves the development of three decision packages for each public function and service. A base-level package meets only the most basic service needs. A current services package maintains the status quo. An enhanced service package provides funds for functions sufficient to meet changing, increased, and unmet needs. Those decision packages can be as granular in line-item details as those involved deem warranted.

Various state laws mandate that counties provide courthouses, jails, health departments, medical examiners, fund the circuit courts, create family divisions within the circuit courts, and other functions. County officials are



MAC strongly supports the work of the **Citizens Research Council of Michigan**, a nonpartisan, independent public policy research organization. MAC Executive Director Stephan Currie currently sits on the CRC Board.

mandated to train local elections officials, maintain vital records, and record real estate transactions. Similarly, decisions to levy voter-approved special-purpose millages remove the latitude to reduce or redirect spending for other purposes.

Several court cases have pitted the independently elected county officials (sheriffs, clerks, etc.) and courts against county boards over questions of funding for mandated services. In response, the courts have established a "minimally serviceable level" standard that says counties are not required to fund mandated services at specified, optimal levels. Instead, counties can provide all services, mandated or otherwise, in a barely adequate manner.

**Continued on page 8**

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## ZERO-BASED BUDGETING IS TIME-TESTED, WELL-SUITED FOR CURRENT SITUATION from page 7

While identifying a base-level package may seem intuitive, recognize that few department heads or elected row officers ("row" officers refers to the constitutionally established county offices of sheriff, prosecutor, clerk, treasurer, and register of deeds) want to self-identify a minimal level of funding. What is offered as a base-level package may not be a "true" base level.

A current services package is self-explanatory. What would it cost to deliver the same, current-year service level over the next fiscal year? This can be done with or without inflationary adjustments but should take into account caseload adjustments. The simplicity in preparing this service package must be weighed against the realization that this model fails to acknowledge that needs and priorities change.

Enhanced service packages can be aspirational or reflect changing circumstances. Aspirational packages may include ideas proposed by county commissioners or solicited from department heads, bureau chiefs, and team leaders.

Changing circumstances make "discretionary" spending feel very necessary. A little more than a year ago, the need for personal protective equipment for public safety workers and frontline staff may have seemed frivolous.

Similarly, many shoreline counties currently are fighting erosion caused by rising lake levels. For the foreseeable future, these "discretionary" services are high priorities.

The concepts of zero-based budgeting are not new. County apportionment boards are relics of an exercise rooted in these concepts. In the days before the Headlee Amendment's voter approval requirements for most tax levies, these boards were tasked with allocating the constitutionally limited 15 mills among the county, townships, and school districts. County boards of supervisors had to manage appropriations within their millage allotment, and they knew that requests to alter apportionments would cause townships and schools to have less.

Whether driven by the tenets of zero-based budgeting, a results-oriented process such as is laid out in David Osborne and Peter Hutchinson's *The Price of Government*, or another method, county commissioners are well served to adopt a methodology that allows budget makers to systematically assess wants and needs. What activities must be provided and what levels? What activities are not mandated, but cannot realistically be cut? And where is the wiggle room to develop budgets that find compromises?

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## MACAOARTICLE

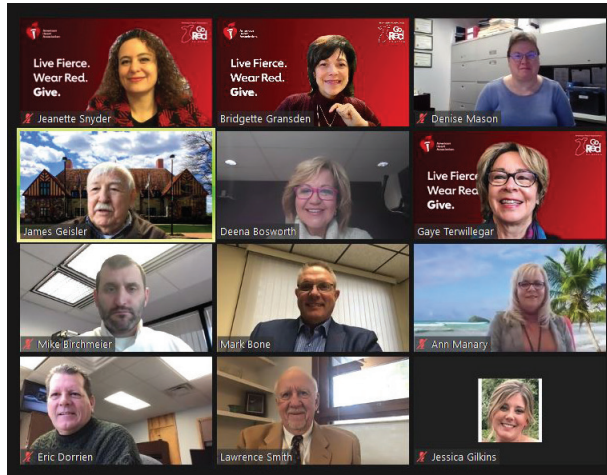
# DAY IN THE LIFE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATION IN MIDLAND

*Editor's note: As part of MAC's efforts to better understand the challenges our members face day in and day out, Governmental Affairs Director Deena Bosworth braved slippery roads and spent a day in January shadowing Midland County Administrator Bridgette Gransden for a day.*

### 10 a.m.: Call with FEMA consultants

"We started the morning on a conference call with the Federal Emergency Management Agency consultants talking about the flood and the way Midland went about procuring services," Bosworth said. "In an attempt to coordinate and assist with all of the paperwork and bidding requirements, the County of Midland worked with the Center for the Arts and the village of Sanford to come up with the criteria for putting things out to bid."

"Unfortunately, FEMA has somewhat conflicting rules on the process and are challenging the way the entities worked together on the procurement process. In addition, some claims are being denied because they dealt with debris in natural areas that are used for trails and parks in Midland."



MAC's Deena Bosworth joined members of the Midland County Board of Commissioners for a recent session.

### 1:30 p.m.: Finance Committee Meeting

"In the afternoon, the county's Finance Committee met to discuss an amendment to the budget to spend the leftover \$42,000 (out of \$72,000) from the veteran service coordinator's office from last year on additional grants to assist veterans affected by COVID and the flood," said Bosworth.

### 2:30 p.m.: Administration and Operations Committee (A&O)

"At this meeting, they discussed federal 5311 funds. This is

(Michigan Department of Transportation) pass-through funds that Midland has to receive and then pass on to County Connection, LLS, the company that provides transit services for Midland County. It's a public private partnership in which the county owns the vehicles, and insures them, while the private company runs the operations.

### 3:30 p.m.: Call with website design firm

"This was a meeting scheduled with our new website consultant from New York — Jesse James Creative," explained Gransden. "However, the snowstorm in

**Continued on page 10**



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[micounties.org/macao-michigan-association-of-county-administrative-officers](http://micounties.org/macao-michigan-association-of-county-administrative-officers)

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## MACAO ARTICLE

### DAY IN THE LIFE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATION IN MIDLAND

from page 9

New York wiped out their internet and telecom services, so the meeting had to be postponed.”

#### Day's end

“I also received a tour of the building,” Bosworth said, “but didn’t get to meet many people because so many are working from home or on a rotating schedule in the office.; all meetings were virtual.”

“Some spur-of-the-moment issues that came up (that day) I had to address were related to COVID, Health Department communications, social media responses related to COVID and vaccinations, FEMA documentation that needed to be cleared up and setting up meetings for the next day with the state to discuss FEMA and debris management, to name a few,” Gransden said.

“I did get to show Deena around the County Services Building, but not the courthouse, Gransden added. “There was much less movement, though, since her visit was during COVID and we are following the MiOSHA and MDHHS requirements of remote work when possible. We remain open to the public, but we are rotating staff weeks

on and then off in most offices to avoid an entire office being exposed to COVID at one time.”

“Bridgette is a delight, and it was a great day,” Bosworth said.

#### Post-visit

“I later followed up and attended the county’s virtual meeting, in which they discussed the veteran service coordinator’s amendment; a contract for media services proposed by the Health Department, as it relates to CARES Act dollars and COVID-related messaging; a recommendation by the IT director for peer review on the surveyor and remonumentation duties in the county; and approval of the FY21 amendment for the 5311 transportation dollars for County Connection,” Bosworth said.

“The experience gave me a stronger understanding of the myriad issues that confront county administration on any given day – something I hope to convey more explicitly to legislators as we discuss state mandates and local government finance in the year ahead.”

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## EXPERT CORNER

# HOW TO SET WELL-BEING GOALS FOR YOUR COMPANY

By Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

A new year means another opportunity to try something new that will enhance your company's culture of well-being. Stress in the workplace is normal and, in moderation, can be a good thing. People with a healthy level of stress can experience a boost in energy and be motivated to beat challenges in life. When stress becomes too much, productivity and morale fall by the wayside.



You may be unknowingly making it more difficult for your employees to manage stress by allowing too many distractions or overwhelming employees with heavy workloads. However, by investing in programs to improve your employees' health and well-being can make sure you are minimizing stress in the workplace.

When it comes to mental well-being, it is important to lead by example so your employees see the importance of focusing on mental health and well-being. Here are some activities you can try:

- Conduct mental health check-ins that include asking employees how they are doing.
- Encourage mindfulness by offering breathing and meditation opportunities.

- Promote the value of sleep to encourage rest and recovery.

In the winter, people tend to stay inside more and turn to comfort food. Many find it especially true this year as some things are still on lockdown during the pandemic. To offset this, consider the following for your company:

- Promote team-based or personal challenges around nutrition and exercise.
- Go beyond the step count to encourage things such as strength training and stretching.

Things might still look different in 2021 as in-person gatherings will still take time to be possible again. Since social and community well-being are so important to overall health, you can:

- Offer topic-specific discussion boards and groups.
- Host virtual meetings with cameras on so people can see each other.
- Conduct virtual team-building events.
- Create opportunities to give.

No matter how you choose to begin 2021, put your employees first, and think outside the box to offer new and innovative ideas that support them.

Want to learn more about how to set company well-being goals for the new year? Join this Blue Cross® Virtual Well-Being **webinar** to discuss ideas to address employee well-being through physical, behavioral, community, social and financial well-being. You can also sign up for future employer-focused and general interest webinars **here**, where you'll also find past sessions and resources.



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## BEST PRACTICES

# NEWAYGO COUNTY TAKES UNIQUE APPROACH TO RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

By Chris Wren/Newaygo County Administrator

Newaygo County, like many rural counties, has faced a continuing challenge of housing availability, especially with new home construction. Just north of Kent County and the urban core of Grand Rapids, Newaygo County has competed with one of the fastest-growing cities and regions in Michigan and struggled to attract housing development away from the substantial demand south of the county.

Enter a first of its kind collaboration between Newaygo County Brownfield Authority, Sable Homes, Michigan Land Bank Authority and The Right Place, Inc.

Sable Homes of Rockford has a moderate-sized development about to finish the first phase of successful new development for middle-class housing. The development included an additional 20 acres that could add accommodate an additional 16 homes, but Sable faced a challenge: The cost to add roads and infrastructure for the new section would have raised the homes' prices beyond what was competitive or attractive for the area.

But by utilizing brownfield incentives through a tax increment financing amendment to offset infrastructure costs for phase 2 of their development, Sable was able to proceed. The developer deeded the phase 2 property to the Land Bank of Michigan, which, in turn, deemed the property as blighted and opened the door for brownfield incentives. The property was then turned back over to the developer.

Of course, brownfield incentives have helped reduce development costs for contaminated and blighted properties within the county for years, but this is the first time a private property has been handled in this manner.

Michigan law states a property that's contaminated, blighted, functionally obsolete, historic or owned by a county or state land bank qualifies for incentives. The tax incentives can then be used to clean up the property or, as in this case, used for infrastructure and site preparation.

The Newaygo County Board of Commissioners approved the Brownfield Plan Amendment establishing a 10-year Tax

Increment Financing Plan, thereby allowing the developer to capture incremental tax increases on the property to offset the cost of infrastructure and site preparation. This tax capture will allow the development of those additional 16 homes to bring much needed housing to the community.

The process was straightforward, as the developer hired a consultant to develop the plan amendment and TIF plan. The Right Place, Inc. whom the County contracts with for economic development played a pivotal role working with the developer, County and State Land Bank. The City of Newaygo also supported the project and quickly provided approvals for the State Land Bank and TIF amendment.

Newaygo County, the city of Newaygo and the state will be paid taxes at the pre-development rate until the project is reimbursed (10 years), at which time the full value of the improved properties will be taxed. And the County Brownfield Authority will collect \$15,000 from the increased property tax for its revolving fund.

If your county is interested in a similar project, please contact me at 231-689-7203 or [chrisw@co.newaygo.mi.us](mailto:chrisw@co.newaygo.mi.us).



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Please send a brief description and contact information for the point person of your "Best Practice" to Derek Melot, [melot@micounties.org](mailto:melot@micounties.org).

For questions, call Melot at 517-372-5374.



HOW COUNTIES ARE TURNING  
CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES



# HIGH PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



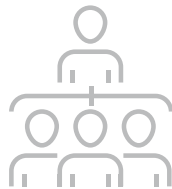
Counties affect the lives of residents every day. When our frontline staff are empowered as leaders, we deliver services more effectively. **The NACo High Performance Leadership Academy is a resource that connects your staff with practical leadership training.** HPLA uses an innovative, interactive online learning platform that combines real-time webinars, recorded sessions and small group discussions to deliver effective training without traveling away from the county – saving money and maximizing time.

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### COLLABORATE:

Establish alignment and strong partnerships through building stronger relationships



### DELIVER:

Measure projects and processes to deliver results aligned with county and community priorities



### COMMUNICATE:

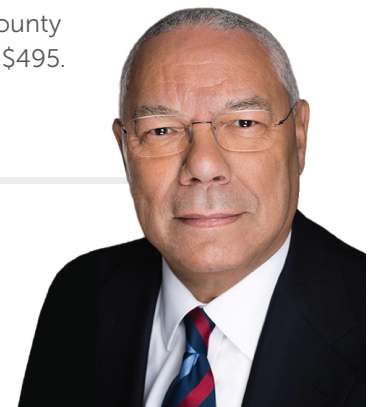
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## AFFILIATE CORNER

# LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS GRAPPLE WITH INADEQUATE, UNPREDICTABLE VACCINE SUPPLIES

By Norm Hess/Executive Director, Michigan Association of Local Public Health

For over 100 years, Michigan's 45 city, county and multi-county district health departments have quietly gone about the business of protecting and improving the health of Michiganders. They ensure the safety of our food and water supplies, investigate disease outbreaks, administer vaccinations for children and adults, educate and support people who have chronic diseases, provide vision and hearing screenings for children, link individuals and families to other community services, and the list goes on.

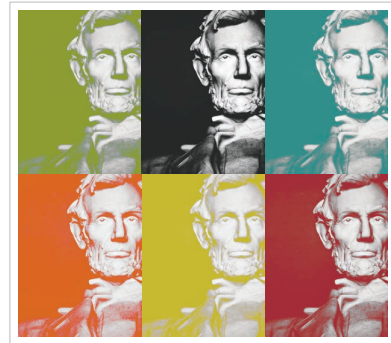
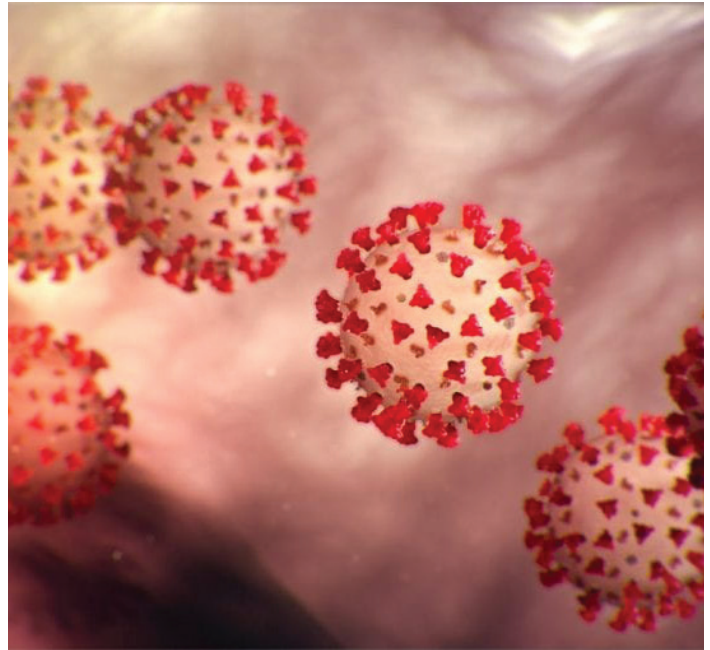
The COVID-19 pandemic has thrust local health departments into the public spotlight like never before. For the past year, staff have been working around the clock to set up COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, follow up on reports of outbreaks, enforce epidemic orders, and provide vaccinations — all while continuing many other essential services to protect and promote health.

Local health departments follow a phased approach developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for determining vaccine eligibility, and they are working hard to implement the five main components of the COVID-19 vaccine strategy set forth by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS):

- 70 percent of Michiganders age 16 and up are vaccinated as quickly as possible.
- 90 percent of doses received are administered within 7 days of arrival.
- 95 percent of people get their second dose within the expected time frame.
- There is no disparity in vaccination rates across racial and ethnic groups or by social vulnerability index.
- All Michiganders can access vaccine within a 20-minute drive of their home.

This work requires a great deal of planning and logistical support to create an efficient system of vaccinating large numbers of people quickly. It takes the coordinated efforts of local health departments, hospitals and health systems, pharmacies and physician practices to create many access points so anyone who wants a vaccine can get one.

So far, these efforts have been severely hampered by an inadequate and unpredictable supply of vaccine. In many communities, there are tens of thousands of people eligible to receive the vaccine, but only a fraction of the necessary doses arrives each week. This has resulted in a great deal of frustration for older adults and their families and for eligible frontline workers. It also causes confusion and



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**Continued on page 15**



## LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS GRAPPLE WITH INADEQUATE, UNPREDICTABLE VACCINE SUPPLIES

from page 14

frustration for health care providers who are ready to provide vaccinations to their patients, but who are unable to acquire the vaccine.

Local health departments are skilled in mobilizing staff and partner organizations to conduct mass vaccination events. Communities across Michigan have the capacity to provide vaccinations to many more people than are currently receiving them. Increased production of approved vaccines, and emergency use authorization for additional vaccines, will increase supply and will help Michigan reach its goal of administering 50,000 vaccinations per day.

Local health departments, hospitals, and pharmacies across the state have created sign up lists and vaccine interest forms and will contact residents to schedule appointments as supply allows. It is recommended that individuals add their names to multiple lists to shorten their wait, but only one vaccination appointment time should be accepted. Booking multiple vaccination appointments decreases efficiency and can delay access for others who are eligible.

We are all weary of living in this pandemic. The COVID-19 vaccine is the path forward toward a more normal life. More than 2 million doses have been administered to date in Michigan and more are on the way. In the meantime, please continue practicing good preventive care such as social distancing, wearing a mask, frequent handwashing, and staying home if you have symptoms.

Visit [Michigan.gov/COVIDvaccine](https://Michigan.gov/COVIDvaccine) for the most up-to-date information about vaccine eligibility, safety information, and clinic locations. People who do not have access to the internet can call the COVID-19 Hotline for assistance at 888-535-6136, which is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

*The **Michigan Association for Local Public Health** was founded in 1985 to represent Michigan's 45 city, county and district health departments and strengthen Michigan's system of local public health departments and local governing boards.*

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MEET YOUR **MAC** BOARD

## VAUGHN J. BEGICK AND SCOTT NOESEN



**Name:** Vaughn J. Begick

**County/MAC Region:** Bay/6

**Position:** Director

**County Service:** Bay County  
Commissioner, 2004-present

**Profession:** Physician Assistant

**Previous Public Service:** None

**What is your county's most pressing needs/projects as you emerge from the COVID pandemic?**

At this time, the no. 1 project is getting the vaccine out in the next six months to 70 percent of our population in Bay County, which would be 70,000 citizens. There is a shortage of vaccine and health care providers to give the vaccine.

Second is balancing our budget, which is stressed due to the pandemic. This year and next, the property tax income may be reduced and possibly revenue sharing from the state.

Infrastructure, especially roads and bridges, continues to be a problem area. For Bay City, the maintenance of the bridges that the city owns has been a problem that may be solved with a private company buying them. But along with that, tolls on the bridges will be started.

The drop in population, which will be better defined when the census figures are out, is also a concern. It will affect federal funds and other tax revenue in Bay County.

There are plans to upgrade our Animal Services and Adoption Center building with a possible millage request.



**Name:** Scott Noesen

**County/MAC Region:** Midland/6

**Position:** Director

**County Service:** Midland County  
Commissioner, 2014-present

**Profession:** Retired from Dow Chemical in 2008; consulting, teaching and speaking on business sustainability

**Previous Public Service:** None

**What are your county's most pressing needs/projects as you emerge from the COVID pandemic?**

To say that 2020 was a challenging year in Midland

County would be a huge understatement! In addition to the COVID pandemic issues, on May 19, two dams in Midland and Gladwin counties had catastrophic failures, leading to extreme flooding events below the dams. With the swift action of our Emergency Operations Center (EOC), we were able to evacuate more than 11,000 people with no deaths or significant injuries!

With the hard work of many volunteers and the support of the National Flood Insurance Program and FEMA, the county is making significant progress on rebuilding homes and businesses in Sanford and Midland. What remains, though, is a herculean task of assessing damages and the costs of options to rebuild the dams or other options. Midland and Gladwin county commissioners created the Four Lakes Task Force to deal with the significant operational aspects of rebuilding, including the huge issue of paying for the estimated hundreds of millions of dollars to fully rebuild these dams. State and federal funds will be pursued, but, in any scenario, both counties will need to look at creative ways to generate funds (including Special Assessment Districts, millages, bonding, etc.).

This is going to be a significant long-term challenge and highlights the need for long-term planning for our county. As Chair of our Finance Committee, I am supporting an effort to do 5-10 year planning with various scenarios.

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## LEGISLATOR Q&amp;A

## HOUSE SPEAKER JASON WENTWORTH

**Name:** Jason Wentworth

**District/counties:** 97/Osceola, Arenac, Clare, Gladwin

**Committees:** N/A

**Term #:** 3

**Previous public service:** N/A



Wentworth

### What is the most pressing issue facing Michigan now?

Trust in government. We can address all sorts of issues — whether it's access to quality healthcare, investment in our aging infrastructure, healing Michigan's economy, and getting people back to work — but if people don't trust their government, they're not going to trust our processes or outcomes. We need to restore a conversation of integrity between government and the taxpayers who fund it to ease anger and frustration and to allow the messages of the important work to get through.

Once we've done that, we need to reopen Michigan for business and education: We need to safely get commerce rolling, get help wanted signs in windows, get vaccinations in arms, and get children in schools. We also have to make sure all Michiganders have access to quality, affordable healthcare (including affordable pharmaceuticals), and we have to address challenges with our aging infrastructure. These are at the top of a long list of things we must address for the people of the state.

### Based on your experience, how important are counties to the effective delivery of public services?

The issues counties face and services you provide directly and visibly impact the people. How well you do those things reflects on government as a whole. You're a critical link. When county government is strong and working well, you're providing services, safe communities, and hope, and are the visible representation of strong government and leadership. And we depend on you to provide input as we create policy, and then to carry out the services dictated by that policy. This interdependency — the relationship between bodies of government and the impact we have on people's lives and on their perceptions of our worth — is critical, and county government is one of the places where the rubber meets the road.

### You've achieved many important legislative changes, such as auto insurance reform and being a champion for county veteran services. What are some of your goals and priorities for this upcoming term?

We intend to address the critical issues I mentioned

above — trust in government, opening Michigan for business, access to affordable healthcare, infrastructure investment — and more. We will engage the people of the state in their government; we will have people affected by policies at the table as we discuss and design them, and we will be a listening, learning body of legislators. I will work to achieve bipartisanship as often as possible and to be a leader in civility and in bold conversation about the issues that face us. Too often these days we shrink from those conversations because we're concerned about the political ramifications. I don't care about that. I am not concerned with politics; I care about getting things done for the people who sent us to Lansing. I care about getting to the crux of the issues, about addressing things openly and honestly — even when that's difficult — and about ensuring processes of integrity and inclusion.

### What are some of the biggest lessons you've learned during your time in the legislature thus far that will help you as Speaker of the House of Representatives?

I have learned that you can find good ideas in many places so being a good and open listener is critical. I have learned that politics too often gets in the way of progress. I have learned that there are many solid and critical partners in the legislative process, including organizations like this one. And I have learned that it's all too easy to be removed from the impact of the policies we create, so we have to be purposeful in understanding that, in being accountable, and in building on what works and changing what doesn't. I've also learned that the last thing — changing something you've already done — can be a monumental task, so it's critical to get the right things done right the first time.

### What do you anticipate being one of the largest hurdles you may have to overcome in your new role as the House leader?

The issues facing the people of the state are as big as any time in recent history. Our children have been as hurt by the state's response to COVID as by the virus itself — things like massive learning loss and serious mental health issues. Our families and businesses have been devastated by the state's response to COVID. And the mood and spirit of the state have been gravely injured, leading to the distrust we're seeing today. Regaining that trust is going to be a huge hurdle, but we have to do that, even as we do all the other work of government, or we will face battles with everything we try to get done. Connecting people to and involving people in their government, having a bipartisan focus, having a governor who is willing to work with the legislature, and working together toward bipartisan successes will be critical in restoring that trust. And having strong relationships with organizations like MAC will help us do that by creating solid, well-informed legislation and by being one of the messengers that helps us connect people to their state government.



## LEGISLATOR Q&A

# HOUSE DEMOCRATIC LEADER DONNA LASINSKI

**Name:** Donna Lasinski

**District/counties:** 52/Washtenaw County

**Term #:** 3

**Previous public service:** Treasurer for the Ann Arbor School Board; Director of the Washtenaw County Association of School Boards



Lasinski

### What is the most pressing issue facing Michigan now?

Defeating COVID-19 is the most serious challenge our state has faced in recent history and ensuring Michigan is on the path to health and economic recovery informs every decision I make. The pandemic has impacted nearly every aspect of our lives, so the scope of our measures to address it must be just as comprehensive. This includes supporting small businesses and local governments, investing in education and infrastructure, and ensuring the vaccine is accessible to as many Michiganders as quickly as possible. We have spent much of the past year treating the symptoms of the pandemic by providing temporary support for those struggling, but our work will be to address the root cause of all of these issues.

### Based on your experience, how important are counties to the effective delivery of public services?

Local government officials also have a unique understanding of hyper-local issues and the opportunity to keep their finger on the pulse of their community. Counties are responsible for many of the vital services people rely on every day — from administering health services to supervising elections. Currently, county health departments play a critical role in vaccine distribution. State officials often rely on the input of counties to help inform us of issues we need to address. When state and local governments work together to find solutions and provide vital services, it provides the best outcome for Michiganders.

### What are some of your goals and priorities for this upcoming term?

My immediate focus is on providing the support and resources Michiganders need to not only weather this pandemic but get back on our feet once we finally defeat COVID. This includes ensuring our state can equitably distribute vaccines, which will protect our most vulnerable communities and boost our economic recovery by allowing people to safely return to work.

We must also provide support for our students and teachers, who have faced new challenges during this pandemic and met them head on, finding creative ways to continue learning outside of the classroom. Distance learning has been a necessary step to ensure the safety of our communities during this crisis, but it can never truly replace in-person classroom learning. I will work to ensure schools have the resources to reopen safely and continue to provide a world class education to our children.

The pandemic has not only caused a great number of challenges, but it has also exposed flaws that have existed long before this crisis. Now is our opportunity to address and fix many of these issues, like our underfunded unemployment system and inequitable broadband access. This past year also demonstrated the need to streamline and modernize our election process, as well as reminded us of the importance of protecting our natural resources and ensuring access to clean water.

### What are some of the biggest lessons you've learned during your time in the legislature thus far that will help you be a leader for your caucus?

My experience in government has reinforced my belief in the importance of listening to members of the community — we're here to represent the needs of the people of Michigan, so we're most effective at our job when acting on public input. I have also witnessed the effectiveness of building consensus among my peers by finding common ground and working from there to find solutions we can all support.

### What do you anticipate being one of the largest hurdles you may have to overcome in your new leadership role?

The pandemic, which should not have been a matter influenced by political affiliation, has somehow driven a further partisan wedge into issues that should transcend party lines. I am more committed than ever to work to find common ground to defeat COVID and rebuild in its wake, which will require a level of cooperation and collaboration that has been sorely missing over the past year.

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